

**THE IMPACT OF WOMEN ON THE ORGANIZATION OF THE
KINDERTRANSPORT: AN EXAMINATION OF THE HISTORICAL
RECORD PRIMARILY UTILIZING ORAL HISTORY**

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ABSTRACT

The Impact of Women on the Organization of the Kindertransport: An Examination of the Historical Record Primarily Utilizing Oral History

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As tensions rose in Germany before World War II, the danger faced by high-risk populations also rose. In response to this threat, organized evacuation efforts eventually became necessary for the survival of these targeted groups. The Kindertransports were efforts organized from various cultural, economic, and national divisions. The movement consisted of several organizations that formed loose coalitions with one purpose, to save children. These children, or ‘Kinder,’ were taken from Nazi Germany to Great Britain between 1938 and 1940. The Kindertransports saved roughly 10,000 Kinder from probable death. Coordination between Kinder, their families, the British government, the German government, and the governments of all countries Kinder passed through were necessary for the continued success of the movement. Through careful consideration of oral histories, public records, and relevant scholarly publications, this work proposes the extraordinary impact of women on the facilitation of this rescue and their impact on the memory of Kinder who later gave oral history. Each Kind who provided their history gave a unique story. However, consistencies became evident with a holistic view of the testimony. With the purpose of contextualizing these perceptions of women

as caregivers and facilitators, this project follows the Kindertransports in an orderly manner from the times before the rise of Nazi Germany to the settlement of Kinder in Great Britain and the internment that many Kinder faced. This work focuses on both the actions of specific individuals and also generalizes about whole organizational groups. In the conclusion of this examination, it is clear that the Kinder's perception of women as being instrumental in this rescue was indeed accurate. These findings are significant because most examinations of the Kindertransport depict women as secondary characters. This study continues the current historiography of looking at women as central characters in the historical narrative.

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I also have to thank my family, friends, and those who have surrounded me with endless support. Your continued listening has enabled me to finish this study and it has helped shape me into the person I am today.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

With her soft voice cracking through the emotional memory, Margot Safirstein described her experiences on the Kindertransport. Her journey did not begin on the transport nor did it end with her arrival to Great Britain; the Kindertransport was just a chapter in her narrative.¹ Like many other children, her history is both unique and ordinary. Described 77 years after the events took place, Margot's testimony remains both potent in detail and meaning. As the overall understanding of the Holocaust increases and the ability to obtain new oral history fades, historians must begin diligently preserving and recording data. This impending loss of historical resources means that an advanced investigation into the context of oral history has become increasingly important

While the Kindertransports were programs that saved the lives of more than 10,000 children between 1938 and 1940. They were a process that demanded harsh regulations and quickness. Facilitated by several multinational organizations, the Kindertransports were parts of a radical movement to get as many children away from Nazi terror as possible. The movement itself often resulted its own form of trauma. "The tale of the Kindertransports is not only one of triumph but also of trauma and diversity."²

The Kindertransports were often the last effort to save the lives of endangered children between 1938 and 1940. Through testimony of men and women, it is clear how women became more impactful in the Kindertransports. Consistent with the findings of Kaplan, women were perceived as more calm and levelheaded through the unrest following the November Pogroms.³

Women were present as mediators, organizers, and instigators throughout the Kindertransport process. They represented a symbol of domesticity, as such, they were natural candidates for the care of youth.⁴ Because of the structure of 1930's society, it was not possible for women to have executed the Kindertransport alone, but they provided irreplaceable effort to the rescue of Kinder. This work was represented throughout Kinder recollection of rescue, transport, and their continued care. Women are present in a wide array of sources as a present and driving force behind the survival of Kinder. This work will discuss women's roles within organizations and as individuals throughout the Kindertransport by utilizing oral histories, organizational records, and the work of previous historians.

The vocabulary of this work is purposeful. The children who endured the Kindertransports will be referred to as Kinder in the plural and Kind in the singular. This terminology is to respect that they were victims, survivors, and children. Survivors are often considered those who remained and could not find transport, but still lived. These children, though they found transport, experienced their own unique traumas. As they process the memory, the trauma can define their future experiences. This paper will use the vocabulary of Kind and Kinder because it most closely aligns with the testimonies examined, the most prominent texts, and provides the Kinder with recognition of their trauma.

Testimony, when combined with other, reliable sources can become a useful tool to provide insight into the events of the past. In my attempts to understand these testimonies, I purposely took the testimonies as truth. Because these histories were truth to the Kind, I can make observations concerning their story. The following chapters and this introduction, utilize testimonies from the *Visual History Archives* at the USC Shoah Foundation as well as two testimonies I documented in 2017.

For the purpose of this paper, only Kinder who went to Great Britain will be discussed. The Kinder in Great Britain have a distinctly different narrative than Kinder sent elsewhere. To maintain continuity, a geographic limit must be established.

The November Pogroms incited a desire for the west to help German-Jewry, specifically the children. The night of 9 November 1938 would become famous worldwide as a symbol of intolerance, terror, and inhumanity. Kristallnacht, alternatively known as the November Pogroms, was the premeditated attack on Jewish life within Germany. The attack took place overnight and targeted places that were at the center of Jewish life, such as homes, businesses, and synagogues. Storm troopers and citizens both retaliated against the Jews for reasons publicly explained as retribution for the murder of a German ambassador.⁵

In total, over twenty- six thousand Jewish men were taken to concentration camps, one-hundred Jews were killed, and hundreds of millions of marks were levied in fines against the Jewish community. This was the first time that people were arrested in Germany for just being Jewish. This pogrom was not the first of its kind, but it was the marker of a shift in the way of life for German- Jewry⁶.

Margot Safirstein did not discuss witnessing violent Anti- Semitism until she spoke of Kristallnacht on November 9-10, 1938. Margot recalled her father hearing vandals breaking into the local Jeweler's store in the middle of the night. With concern for the Jeweler's business and their family's business, her father investigated the sound. The destruction was not isolate to the jeweler's broken window, "Berlin was on fire."⁷ The destruction came only days before the final decree that excluded Jews completely from German economic life.⁸ Margot did not describe the day her parents lost their business, but based on her description of the November Pogroms, her father's business likely closed in the following days.⁹¹⁰

Dr. Dori Laub explained that there is a tendency with trauma survivors to retreat into the safety of silence, he argued that the listener must acknowledge this silence to maintain respect for the presentation of vulnerability.¹¹ As Margot proceeded with her testimony, her silence was respected. There were times when the story would come to a halt; this was allowed. Laub also addressed a different form of silence. Margot shared both herself and her memory when she gave her testimony. This was a sacrifice and a necessity.¹² As Margot gave her history, it was not fact checked. The testimony was valued based on its role as an account of the Kind's memories. Verifying the speaker's statements could have changed the narrative, or it could have created distrust between the listener and the narrator. There were elements of her story which did not align with historical data. Laub argued that the larger value in oral history does not come from historical accuracies, but rather the ways in which the listener can interpret both the inaccuracies and the breaks in the narrative. The reconciliation between oral histories and fact will be the primary endeavor of this discussion. Just as a researcher should check all facts, all interviewers should respect the broader knowledge of the survivor narratives. Later, the listener can deepen the knowledge through contextualization in history.¹³ Laub asserts this dual understanding of the history must take place to have a full witness.

Margot's family lived a dramatically different life in the following months of 1938. Her family moved from having financial stability in an uneasy political climate into a struggle for survival. The time between the November Pogroms and May 1939 is a silence in Margot's Narrative. In Nazi Germany, between November 1938 and May 1939 there were both the implementation and the enforcement of new and old anti- Semitic laws. The conditions in Nazi Germany worsened daily and public understanding of danger increased. The Jews of Germany could not feign ignorance, and this spurred a mass migration attempt.¹⁴

Prior to Kristallnacht, the British government was poised to act in a similar nature to the Americans and the majority of the world, by not taking significant action against Nazi terror¹⁵. Neville Chamberlin did not initially respond in a way that would indicate he was in favor of accepting migrants. However, the Cabinet decided that something needed to be done, and so action was taken.¹⁶ This may not have been an altruistic decision. The other major groups admitted to Britain at this time were domestic servants and men on a “transmigrant” visa. The domestic servants were primarily to serve the middle class, and the men were expected to leave at the end of the war. Though these visas saved more lives than the Kindertransports, they were established to fill needs within their society or they were expected to leave quickly.¹⁷

The limited visas were accepted by the British citizens until the November Pogroms took place. This status quo was disturbed when media sources in Britain were very public about the November Pogrom. This prompted outrage among the public and forced government action. A few days after the attacks there was a plan before the Council for German- Jewry that advocated the rescue of as many children as was possible.¹⁸ The visibility of the violence against Jews compelled the citizens to appeal to the British government to take action. They soon discussed the possibility of child migrants and decided that this would be a small way to make up for the horrors the rest of their people would face.¹⁹

The immigration policy of Britain was changed to allow an increased number of migrants. Britain was “virtually alone” in their quota increases. These changes came at a time when there was also an increase in the number of people desperate to flee. Before 1938, a refugee could have been refused entry even if they had a visa. Government interventions allowed for this to change.²⁰ Germany had also decreased their requirements for emigration, this aligned with their desire for Jews to leave. Anti- Semitism was still present in Great Britain; however,

the passage was not halted and there was not a significant opposition to changing immigration policies.²¹

Overall the decision to allow the Kinder into the nation was due to pressures by the public on the government. The reasoning for the visas given to the others was to fill needs within their society. Overall, Great Britain was not willing or ready to accept permanent immigrants of any form. In many ways, the outcome was not what they intended. Many of the Kinder and adults never left.

The fate of German Jews was clear over time. Those who were able, should leave.²² Jews within Germany began to become desperate, they knew that there was little hope to stop the coming violence.²³ Children were major targets of the Nazis from the start. Following the November Pogroms, violence towards children increased. It increased first with orphanages and places where the targeted demographic was already identified for the Party. This was the children's last chance for survival.²⁴

Margot's ticket to safety came with the Kindertransport on May 14th, 1939. May 14th was a date she could remember because it was Mother's Day. This anecdote was the first thing Margot discussed when she was asked to describe their experience in the Kindertransport. This detail emphasizes how impactful her mother was in this instant. She remembered her mother taking her to the station alone and saying goodbye to her without the promise of seeing each other again.²⁵ Though she did not elaborate, it is likely that Margot's father was not able to leave their home for safety reasons. In the time following the November Pogroms, Jewish men were both detained and killed. This violence left Jewish women to leave home when the need arose.²⁶ As Margot left the station in Berlin for Holland then Britain, she did not know how or why she would arrive to safety. She only knew that her mother had brought her to the transport, and she

remembered her mother's eyes as she wept with her departure.²⁷ Like many others, Margot would have a woman represented in every significant step of their Kindertransport experience. The impact of women on this experience for Margot and the whole population of those transported, was so large that without them the Kindertransports could not have been as successful as they were.

Children were chosen in a controlled manner for the transport and sent into a poorly controlled situation. The process of choosing children for transport varied by the town, but initially it was a first come, first served opportunity.²⁸ There were two main periods for the transport. The first was rushed and focused on survival. The second was methodical and more deliberate. In the first period of selection the regulations were not very strict. However, anyone with a mental or physical irregularity was disqualified from transport. The process for the second period usually involved several steps, that still excluded anyone who was different in mind or body. In the screening process, there was a meeting with a social worker, a doctor's visit, and a questionnaire to be completed. This allowed the organizers to ensure only the best qualified received transport to Britain. The motivation was to encourage others to sponsor those like the flawless children who had already been sent.²⁹ Should troublesome children have been sent, there may have been a reluctance to support the program. Public withdrawal could have cost future Kinder their lives.³⁰

Later in the transport, age, gender, appearance, and history all played major roles in getting the children selected. The process included choices on both sides of the transport. The sponsors often preferred certain attributes. This created an imbalance in the proportions of gender, age, and status among the Kinder chosen. Because the primary placement was with foster families, children who had parents that wished to reunite were often rejected. This was

because people did not want to bond with a child, only to eventually lose the child to their birth parents.³¹

Every story of transport is different, but many themes arise with every story examined. The reality of children being denied transport based on small things was present. There was not enough time or resources to transport all of the children, there was a distinct need to only transport those who had the highest possibility of acclimating well and reflecting positively on the program. Workers had the obligation of ensuring that each child received the best possibility of a good placement, and the families receiving the children expected to receive exactly what they anticipated. Any deviation from these protocols could have sent a Kind into an even more traumatic situation.

On the Austrian end of the Transport, there was an immediate organization of children's names for emigration after the Anschluss. With over 10,000 applicants in the first weeks after the Anschluss, there was a stalemate. At the time, they could not get the children accepted into any country, but when Britain opened their borders to child migrants, they were able to save some of the Kinder. The majority of the Kindertransports from Austria took place between December of 1938 and August of 1939. Before August of 1939 roughly 2,364 children were able to be saved by this office. This left over 8,000 children in Vienna, many of whom perished in the Holocaust.³²

Once a child was chosen to be placed on the Kindertransport, there was still the need to transport them to their sponsor. This part of the transport was complicated and full of bureaucracy.

Margot's recollection of her experiences after her departure from the train station shifted dramatically into a gendered narrative. She explained that traveling as a seventeen-year-old girl

meant that when she boarded the train, someone entrusted Margot with the care of other children. Those around her expected that she was able to care for children because of her femininity. She said it was on the train that she finally “felt free.”³³ Receiving chocolate when she crossed the border with Holland, intensified her freedom from fear. With a tag around her neck, she had been entrusted with the responsibility of caring for others on their way to Great Britain.

Kinder were transported through trains, buses, planes, and boats. They traveled from many places within German occupied territory. The Kindertransports had hub cities which acted as the first stop on the transports. Occasionally the transports would stop in other cities on the way.³⁴ These were Prague, Vienna, Frankfurt, Berlin, the free city of Leipzig, and the Polish city of Danzig. The children would leave these stations, and the majority of transports would travel in the direction of Harwich, England. They would journey from continental Europe to Harwich by boat. Once in Harwich, Kinder who had sponsors would be put on trains, busses, and in cars to get to their sponsor’s city.³⁵

The end of the transport was wherever the individual Kind was supposed to wait out the war. The organizations responsible for the Kinder generally preferred to place children in foster homes. However, children were placed wherever could be considered ‘safe,’ and wherever could be the most financially conservative for the program. The programs wanted to maximize the number of Kinder they could support, this often included being aware of which locations would be least expensive.³⁶

The Kinder’s experiences varied greatly based on their age, location, and individual situation. Many experienced a great amount of hospitality; others did not have the same welcome.³⁷ Kinder in the Transport were taken to Britain, Palestine, and several other European

Countries. However, the vast majority went to Britain.³⁸ The living situations varied greatly, from normal family style housing to schoolhouses built to host refugees.

To the community, the Kindertransports, and the Kinder, the most important thing was the proper integration of the Kinder into Great Britain's community. This meant that when Kinder arrived, they were often taught how to blend into their surroundings. This was important because though the immigration policies had been lightened, there was still anti-Semitism present and there was a need to represent an integrated Jewish population.

When Margot arrived, she was greeted by her "very distant Aunt," Anne Barnet. In retrospect, Margot suspects that her mother clung to any relative she could find to sponsor her journey. Upon their meeting, Margot was so unfamiliar with these people that she mistook a random man for her uncle, whom she did not name. When discussing her aunt, Margot became happier. She explained that she only spoke a small amount of English, and her aunt only spoke a small amount of German. Though communication was a struggle, her aunt's kindness put Margot at ease. She was able to help her aunt with domestic work. This work included providing care for her young cousin.³⁹

There were many organizations that worked to save the Kinder, but consistently throughout each organization, women took leading and fundamental roles in the transportation and care of Kinder. The primary organization for the Kindertransport was the Movement for the Care of Children from Germany. This organization later became The Refugee Children's Movement, also known as the RCM.⁴⁰ Many different entities existed within and apart from this organization. Every child had to be secured with a £50 bond before the Kinder could come to safety. Upon arrival, Kinder who had a place to go would go there directly; those who did not have a place went to Dovercourt to wait for a sponsor.⁴¹

Earlier Aliyah movements which moved large amounts of children to Palestine, served to act as a precursor and guide to the organizations who helped with the Kinder.⁴² Many international organizations, with varying motivations, experiences, and connections worked together to ensure the safety of Kinder. People all over Europe, from every walk of life, formed coalitions to save over 10,000 Kinder from primarily Jewish origins.⁴³

The Refugee Children's Movement was a major mover of children during the transports. British women in the 1930's were expected to care for children and the home. This made them natural candidates for the care of the German refugee children, however to gain political backing they were reliant on men.⁴⁴ Women had only the power given to them by men within British culture.

At every step of the process of saving the Kinder, you could find a woman.⁴⁵ They were the organizers of the transports like Rosa Schwartz. Rosa was known for her ability to remember details about every child she encountered. She used this skill, as the leader of the youth department of the welfare office in Vienna, to ensure that every child had the best placement possible. In Vienna, she knew almost all of the children.⁴⁶

Helen Bentwich, member of the education committee of London County Council, presented with Dennis Cohen, a plan to the Council for German- Jewry just a few days after the November Pogroms. She was prominent within the London County Council, but much of her power came from powerful connections to men.⁴⁷

Women also served as the organizing secretaries of eight of the twelve regional branches of the RCM. This allowed them to exercise control of the organization and manipulate how the regions would work together. This could have also made it more comfortable and encouraging for other women to partake in lower roles within the transports.⁴⁸ Women were not just

organizationally or politically important, they were the head of the household for the majority of the foster homes in which the Kinder stayed.⁴⁹

When considering one of the most prominent refugee programs, the Quaker refugee relief, it is important to note that all of their department heads were women. Bertha Bracey was a Quaker woman who changed the lives of many Kinder. While serving as the Secretary for the Friends Committee on Refugees and Aliens, she spoke of the plight of the Kinder, and she was made the leader of over 80 case workers who helped her in handling over 80,000 case records. These workers were primarily women. She went on to represent the Kinder to both the British government and the German government. Her talent and passion saved the lives of many Kinder.⁵⁰

In the following two chapters I will outline how women like Bertha Bracey were able to act as key components of the Kindertransports. This construction will rely primarily on the accounts of Kinder. When possible, stories will be corroborated, but the purpose of this inspection is to find the impact of women through the perception of Kinder. A testimony can be flawed by several factors like time, trauma, and censorship of vulnerable experiences. All of these factors are evident at one time in this paper. As the author, I will work to create a holistic perspective from the combination of testimony, secondary sources, and non- testimony based primary sources.

In the second chapter, I will outline three major actors in the Kindertransport movement before Kinder left Nazi Germany. First, the ways in which mothers acted as a first source of salvation. Mothers often both prepared and motivated Kinder to leave when the Kindertransport was an option. Kinder whose mothers were unwilling or unable to find them a placement often did not survive the Holocaust. Second, the impact of outside organizers in the movement and

care of Kinder. Outsiders were crucial to the organization of the Kindertransport. They provided advocacy to a group that had lost all power with the rise of Nazism. Third, the impact of Kinder on the experiences of other Kinder. As Kinder moved through the transport in Nazi Germany, the only constant was the presence of other Kinder. They were the only ones who understood the unique struggles of other Kinder. Because of the social climate, female Kinder were more likely to be placed in the role of caretaker when an adequate female adult was not available.

The third chapter will follow the Kinder for the remainder of their journey. Chapter two will focus specifically on female actors outside of Nazi Germany, then it will demonstrate the ways that the impact of these women was depicted in oral history. Women through this part of the journey take very specific roles. Their role was either personally connected to the Kinder, and as a result the role was represented in most testimonies. Or, the person discussed was impactful in an organizational or political manner. This usually resulted in an underrepresentation of the woman within the testimony.

The conclusion will pull the puzzle together by examining the consistencies in the observations mentioned. These consistencies will show the ways that women's work in the Kindertransport impacted Kinder and their testimonies.

¹ Margot Safirstein, interview by Toni Nickel, 2017, New York, NY.

² Greenville, Anthony. *Jewish Refugees From Germany and Austria in Britain: 1933- 1970*. Valentine Mitchell, 2010.

³ Marion A. Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany*, (Oxford University Press, 1998). Kindle edition. 127.

⁴ Sybil Oldfield, "'It Is Usually She': The Role of British Women in the Rescue and Care of the Kindertransport Kinder," *Shofar*, no. 1 (2004).

⁵ Bergen, Doris L. *War & Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003.

⁶ Bergen, *War and Genocide*

⁷ Safirstein.

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- ⁸ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "Kristallnacht," <https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005201>.
- ⁹ Safirstein.
- ¹⁰ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "'Examples of Antisemitic Legislation, 1933–1939,'" <https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007459>.
- ¹¹ Dori Laub, M.D., is a Holocaust survivor who co-founded the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies at Yale. He is a clinical professor of Psychiatry at Yale where his research is primarily in the psychoanalysis of trauma.
- ¹² Dori Laub, "Bearing Witness or the Vicissitudes of Listening," in *The Holocaust: Theoretical Readings*, ed. Neil Levi and Michael Rothberg (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003).
- ¹³ Ibid.
- ¹⁴ Kaplan. 129.
- ¹⁵ Greenville, *The Kindertransports*. 3.
- ¹⁶ Greenville, *The Kindertransports*. 8.
- ¹⁷ Greenville, *The Kindertransports*. 7.
- ¹⁸ Dwork, Deborah, and Robert Jan Van Pelt. *Flight From the Reich*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2009. 166- 167.
- ¹⁹ Dwork and van Pelt, *Flight From the Reich*. 168- 169
- ²⁰ Greenville, *Jewish Refugees From Germany*. 7.
- ²¹ Dwork and van Pelt, *Flight From the Reich*. 170.
- ²² Dwork and van Pelt, *Flight From the Reich*. 166- 167.
- ²³ Dwork and van Pelt, *Flight From the Reich*. 137.
- ²⁴ Guske, Iris. "The Kindertransport Experience: A Socio-psychological Study of Attachment, Trauma, and Acculturation." Master's thesis, Thesis (D. Phil.), 2007.
- ²⁵ Safirstein.
- ²⁶ Kaplan. 121- 29.
- ²⁷ Safirstein.
- ²⁸ Dwork and van Pelt, *Flight From The Reich*. 164.
- ²⁹ Curio, Claudia. "'Invisible' children: the selection and integration strategies of relief organizations." *Shofar* no. 1 (2004): 41. Literature Resource Center, EBSCOhost (accessed May 3, 2016).
- ³⁰ Curio, "'Invisible' Children."
- ³¹ Curio, "'Invisible' Children."
- ³² Curio, "'Invisible' Children." 43.
- ³³ Safirstein.
- ³⁴ Greenville, *The Kindertransports*. 10.
- ³⁵ Dwork and van Pelt, *Flight From The Reich*. 165- 167.
- ³⁶ Curio, "'Invisible' Children." 53.
- ³⁷ *Jewish Refugees From Germany*. 14.
- ³⁸ *Between Dignity and Despair*. 116.
- ³⁹ Safirstein.
- ⁴⁰ "Great Britain & the Holocaust: The Kindertransport." Jewish Virtual Library. December 3, 2013. Accessed May 3, 2016. <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Holocaust/kinder.html>.

⁴¹ "Kindertransport History." Kindertransport Association. Accessed May 04, 2016.

http://www.kindertransport.org/history03_rising.htm.

⁴² *Flight From the Reich*. 126- 127.

⁴³ "Kindertransport History."

⁴⁴ Curio, "Is It Usually She."

⁴⁵ Curio, "Is It Usually She."

⁴⁶ Curio, "'Invisible' Children." 46.

⁴⁷ Dwork and van Pelt, *Flight From The Reich*. 167.

⁴⁸ Curio, "Is It Usually She." 57.

⁴⁹ Curio, "Is It Usually She." 58.

⁵⁰ Curio, "Is It Usually She."

CHAPTER II

ESCAPING NAZI GERMANY

The lasting image of a mother at a rail station is one of the most commonly expressed moments in a Kinder's account of their Kindertransport experience. However, this mother at the rail station was not alone. Along with thousands of other mothers and caregivers, she was a very important part of the Kindertransport experience which may not have happened without them. There were women at every step of a Kind's journey. Mothers, teachers, Kinder, and concerned citizens came together in Nazi Germany to move German children out of the path of danger and into the arms of Great Britain.

Though not a culture free from anti- Semitism, Jewish Kinder remember Germany in the late 1920's and early 1930's as a happy and safe place. With the rise of the Nazi party, there was a distinct shift in the treatment of German Jews. This change was felt by the majority of the Jewish community in the early 1930's. Germany's climate of anti- Semitism continued to wax and wane, until the pains of Anti- Semitism became both acute and undeniable with boycotts, the Nuremberg Laws, (Kaplan 1998, 104)(Kaplan 1998, 104)(Kaplan 1998, 104)(Kaplan 1998, 104) Kristallnacht, and ultimately the deportation and murder of German Jews.⁵¹

In an interview, which I conducted this year at the Leo Baeck Institute, Marianne Salinger recalled life in Berlin before Kristallnacht. Salinger explained that Hitler's Germany brought the Jews "back to being Jewish." Though they may have felt pride in their homeland, German anti-Semitism renewed their community in Judaism.⁵² As Jewish people became more unified, the conversation about emigration became more prevalent in the average Jewish home.⁵³

Before Kristallnacht, countless women fought to find placement for children away from the tumultuous climate of Germany. Nazis closed Jewish schools; Jews had their rights abridged, and Nazis stole much of their property. However, Kristallnacht was the event that most effectively motivated Jews to leave Germany and for the world to become involved in the care of refugee children.⁵⁴

The Kindertransport was a heavily involved process which required that every part be executed correctly to ensure the highest possibility of a Kind making it to safety. The Kindertransports received aid from grassroots efforts and the public influence of a hostile climate towards Jews. Kinder, in their testimonies, explained the importance of their mothers, the help of strangers, and aid from fellow Kinder in their passage from Nazi Germany away from continental Europe on the Kindertransport.

A Mother's Love

Though Jewish women in Nazi Germany often broke traditional gender roles to survive, they added these responsibilities to their existing domestic work.⁵⁵ The mother is the only character consistently represented in testimonies from the Kindertransport. These testimonies make it clear that there was a distinct separation of the father from the domestic sphere. When Kinder discussed their parents, the vocabulary was generally 'mother' or 'parents.' Kinder rarely referred to their Fathers, if they did, it was to indicate that they were taking charge of a situation.

Sylvia Schneider remembered very little about her father, but she was able to remember her mother in great detail. Her mother made a greater impact on her life than her father did. Her father was hospitalized with Tuberculosis when she was around five years old. This event left her mother in charge of the household. She remembers love and security in the home that her mother

maintained. She was a dressmaker who was loving, talented, and educated.⁵⁶ Sylvia's mother was a great influence on her future. Her mother protected her place in the home. The lessons that she learned from her were able to protect her throughout her time on the Kindertransport.

Sylvia's mother attempted to shield her children from the violence around them. The family pretended that nothing was happening, but they were all aware of the increasing danger. Though it was ineffective, this was the only way that she could immediately protect her children from Nazi terror. This desire to shield her children was not unique to Sylvia's mother. Hanna Marcus remembers her parents quietly discussing concentration camps in the time before 1937.⁵⁷ Hanna's parents would not discuss the topic with their children, to keep them unaware of the danger. Sylvia and Hanna's parents were unable to protect them from knowledge of Anti-Semitism.⁵⁸⁵⁹ It was still in their world, and they were more active onlookers than the adults believed. Similarly, when people with power over the lives of German Jewish women attempted to keep them ignorant, the efforts failed. Like with children, trying to keep women ignorant of the danger in the outside world did not create an ignorance of the dangers presented by the outside world.⁶⁰

Hanna and Sylvia's mothers differed greatly in their lifestyles before 1938. The major difference was in financial stability. Hanna's mother was a homemaker who had domestic help.⁶¹ Sylvia's mother had to maintain her dress shop to support her family.⁶² Sylvia did not elaborate on the fate of her mother's business; however, the family likely lost possession of it during the intensification of the Nazi agenda. Hanna's mother was not immune to the laws. During the years before the war, many Jewish women took on work like Hanna's mother. Jewish women were likely to bear the burden of supporting their families because for the time before the war, a Jew's

gender affected their outlook. Jewish men were more likely to lose their jobs, be imprisoned, or be attacked.⁶³

As times became more tumultuous, Thide Salinger began to make arrangements to care for her family. Thide's daughter, Marianne, remembered that her mother took courses prior to emigration. Her mother was aware that she did not have marketable skills. She was also aware that this could help to protect her family through increase emigration opportunities and through the ability to work prior to the receipt of visas.⁶⁴

Mothers were symbolic of domesticity, but their influence reached significantly further into the lives of their children. They presented the traditions of womanhood which linked them to their past, alongside the need to evolve and provide in the face of an Anti- Semitic world. This drive to protect and their connection to domestic life allowed mothers to be beacons of security to their children. The disparity in persecution based on gender enabled them to search for safety for their family.

Marianne Salinger was not a Kind; she was able to find refuge through the work of her mother alone. Thide Salinger was able to organize exit visas for her child. She had the obligation of going to the American consulate, because men had gone into hiding after the events of Kristallnacht. Her mother had the intuition to know that the only path to safety was through emigration, and she had the unique ability of being a Jewish woman who could walk quickly, with her head down, and find safety for her loved ones.⁶⁵

In pre- Kristallnacht Germany, there was a distinct difference in the perception of Germany held by male and female Jews. Women saw a different world, because of the social hierarchy that existed between men and women.⁶⁶ As a result of these differing perceptions, women could see the change in Anti- Semitism before men. This difference played a crucial role

in the Kindertransport process. Women were more likely to push for their families to move because they experienced this difference. They understood that the danger before them was greater than 'normal' anti-Semitic actions. They also experienced the growing desire within the community to emigrate. Women concluded that the tradition of waiting out anti-Semitism would no longer be enough. Marianne Salinger explained that while "men were German, women were more astute."⁶⁷

These realizations had the most profound effect on a woman's immediate family because this was where she held the most influence. The vocabulary used in the discussion of pre-Kristallnacht movements also primarily uses 'mother' or 'parents.' This trend demonstrates the Kinder's perception of a mother being the primary force behind these decisions. Mothers also often played crucial roles in the establishment of a 'safe' place in their new location.

During one of the boycotts, Eva Lewin's parents decided that there was pressing need to leave their small town for Berlin. They wanted to get lost in the number of people and Jews in Berlin. Eva's father said, "nothing will happen to us."⁶⁸ This movement was not uncommon for Jews like the Lewins. The effects of economic and social pressures were felt most severely in small communities like theirs. Destitution took hold of over 80 percent of Jews in smaller cities by 1936.⁶⁹

Once in Berlin, Eva's mother was concerned that they had to establish themselves immediately for the purpose of safety. They had been shopkeepers, and her mother found an opportunity for them to work on behalf of the Baerwald family, administering aid to the Jews of Berlin in the form of a kitchen. This opportunity provided a sense of stability to the household through boycotts and other unsafe situations.⁷⁰ Her mother had taken her understanding of

society and utilized it for the purpose of maintaining her family. Many women followed similar paths.

Though the Lewins moved, they were not like many other Jewish families. Jewish patriarchs often fought against their wives' persuasions. They saw a back- and- forth climate while their wives saw only danger. Men were more tied to the community. Women only saw clear signs of the coming trouble. This exposure was because women rarely left the domestic sphere.⁷¹ Women served to keep their family together against the attacks from their community, but they did not have complete power in their home. As a result of their position and their obligations, they were also usually the last to escape, but the first to see danger.⁷²

In Austria, after the Anschluss, organizers immediately began to assemble names of Kinder for transport. The Anschluss, in 1938, brought violence across Austria and prompted fear among parents. Britain opened a visa program after this movement from the Nazis but, the program did not provide enough help to the Jews of Nazi Germany.⁷³ In the first weeks after the Anschluss, over 10,000 children applied for emigration from Austria. This rush demonstrated the awareness of danger within the community. The desire to leave was present, but they could not provide every child that wanted to leave with placement. Britain accepted roughly two thousand Jewish refugees between the years of 1933 and 1938.⁷⁴ Of the initial 10,000 children, only 26 went on transport before October of 1938.⁷⁵

Alice Boddy's family saw the Anschluss as a tipping point. Her brother was in the army, and this put him at a heightened risk. He left Austria in 1938 to ensure his safety. Alice's mother saw this danger was present for Alice too. Mrs. Boddy registered herself and Alice for a quota number, but she knew her Czechoslovakian passport would mean that her number would come long after her daughter's. She had to accept that she may be separated from both of her children

and face death. Mrs. Boddy also had the burden of making a decision against her family's wishes. Her family wanted her to take her kids to Czechoslovakia. They believed they could be safe there. However, Alice and her mother wanted to go to America, so they stayed. This decision saved her and her daughter, the remainder of their family in Czechoslovakia died at the hands of the Nazis.

Gender affected a person's reactions to antisemitism. In the early years, Women were more likely to engage in flight and men were more likely to remain. Women were more likely to be willing to move to other countries.⁷⁶ As a result, they were more likely to be willing to send their children away. This decision did not come without a significant personal cost to them. However, women often faced tough decisions like these as mothers. When Alice Boddy received the opportunity to take the Kindertransport, her mother had to make the decision to send her only remaining child away in the transport. Her mother made this decision because of the urgency presented by Kristallnacht and the Anschluss. Mrs. Boddy had to gauge the political and social climate against her desire to keep her child close. Ultimately, she saw her children again.⁷⁷ Many women chose to keep their children with them, instead of sending them away. Sylvia Schneider's best friend, Betty Rosendorft was kept behind in Cologne, Germany, until deportation.⁷⁸

Desperate mothers coordinated transports for their kids in the most unlikely situations. In October of 1938, Sylvia Schneider, her sister, and her mother were directed to a police station, from the police station to the rail station, then they were deported with a group of Jews to an abandoned area between Poland and Germany. Even though they had no prior notice, no money, and no belongings, her mother coordinated a way for them to get to Krakow, then she found a way for Sylvia and her sister to get on a Kindertransport.⁷⁹ She decided that her daughters would survive, so they did.

For Kinder hoping to flee Nazi Germany, mothers stood as an integral part of the survival process. Mothers of Kinder encountered times that forced them to hold multiple identities, provided safety for their family, and make decisions that would determine the chance of their child's survival. The Kinder regularly presented their mothers as characters depicting strength and creating safety. They consistently discuss their mother's interventions which saved their life. As danger rose, mothers stood ready to protect their families in any way they could.

The Help of Others

In the effort to save Kinder, there were many kinds of heroes. There were people from various backgrounds, ethnicities, and religions coming together to evacuate Nazi Germany's Jewish children. These people prepared Kinder for transport, chose them to be transported, moved them, or advocated for them while they were still in continental Europe. This was not a very well organized effort, but it achieved its objectives, it saved lives. These others were made up of men and women. However, in the Kinder's testimonies, women are represented at a higher rate than men.

Many Jewish school teachers prepared their students for the coming emigration. This preparation may not have been intentional, but it helped to ease the transition for otherwise unprepared Kinder. Egon Guttman studied both English and French in his Jewish school. This preparation for relocation occurred among several Kinder who described their experiences in Jewish schools.⁸⁰ The Kinder did not always discuss relocation in the context of fleeing. The goal was mostly to move to another country for family, business, or education. Elsbeth Lewin continued beyond a description of her reasons for learning English when she explained that all Jews in this time wanted to go to America. Although, she also said that travel to America was

harder than they had anticipated. (Weisberg 1995) (Weisberg 1995) (Weisberg 1995) (Weisberg 1995)⁸¹ Their Jewish school teachers made the decision to prepare their children to speak in another language. This skill would not have been necessary if the danger was not present. The ability to speak English made the transition to England easier for many Kinder. Conversely, Kinder who did not have experience in English often suffered great pains in their transition into their lives in England. The impact of language will be discussed at greater length in the following chapter.

Before Kinder could arrive to Great Britain, there had to be provisions made for the selection and transportation of each Kind. At the heart of these preparations was a select group of highly motivated activists who, against great odds, saved Kinder. As one of the most famous names in the history of the Kindertransport, Sir Nicholas Winton saved the lives of at least 669 Kinder.⁸² Sir Winton's work was primarily in the Czechoslovakia, where during a visit to Prague in December of 1938 he "saw the necessity of people who wanted to get out, but had no connections to Europe and therefore needed assistance."⁸³ Sir Winton had not intended to visit Prague until his friend Martin Blake, an emissary from the British Committee for Refugees from Czechoslovakia (BCRC), had to change his plans rapidly and Sir Winton followed suit.⁸⁴ Sir Winton did not realize it, but the person who called for help was going to be instrumental in his coming endeavors. Her name was Doreen Warriner.⁸⁵ Sir Winton was aware of the plight faced by Czech Jews, because he had heard of the atrocities from his family and friends. However, he was not concerned with helping beyond familial sponsorship until his trip. Sir Winton realized quickly that he had an ethical obligation to save the children. Unable to save children without a connection, he went to Doreen Warriner. Warriner had headed the Prague office of the BCRC since 1939. She was the well-connected that Sir Winton needed to make his plan successful.

Doreen Warriner acted as the first person from BCRC to put out a massive call for help. She collected the pertinent information for each potential Kind, she organized much of the necessary funding, and she met with Kinder before they left on their journey to safety. Before becoming active in BCRC, Warriner was an academic who became entrenched in the escape of leaders from the Sudeten Social Democratic Party, their wives, and their children. In this effort alone, Doreen Warriner helped to save over 2,500 lives.^{a86} This work uniquely equipped Warriner to become the lead organizer for Sir Winton's efforts. Warriner stayed behind in Prague and continued to run the Prague office of the BCRC, where Polish political prisoners were smuggled into England and transports of Sir Winton's Kinder were organized. In April of 1939, intel suggested that the Gestapo would come to arrest her shortly. She did not leave until she was able to pass the office on to Beatrice Wellington, and the other 120 women who continued her work in her absence.⁸⁷

Rosa Schwartz was a social worker who was crucial in Vienna's placement and evaluation of Kinder. The process of choosing Kinder for the Kindertransports was very calculated. The requirements varied by the town, but initially, it was a first come, first served opportunity.⁸⁸ There were two main periods for the transport. The first was rushed and focused on survival. The second was methodical and more deliberate. In the first phase of selection, the regulations were not very strict. However, anyone with a mental or physical handicap could not take part in the transport. The process for the second phase usually involved several steps, that still excluded anyone disabled in mind or body. In the screening process, there was a meeting with a social worker, a doctor's visit, and a questionnaire. This procedure allowed the organizers

^a Realistically, this figure may rise into six figures, but there was not a perfect account Czech of refugees at this time.

to ensure only the best-suited candidates received transport to Britain. Rosa was known for her ability to remember details about every child she encountered. Rosa used this skill, as the leader of the youth department of the welfare office in Vienna, to ensure that every child had the best placement possible. She knew almost all of the children in Vienna.⁸⁹

The motivation behind carefully selecting Kinder to travel was to encourage others to sponsor more Kinder like the perfect children who had already arrived.⁹⁰ Should troublesome children have been sent, there may have been a reluctance to support the program. Public withdrawal could have cost future Kinder their lives.⁹¹ Support in every area of the Kindertransport was aware of the importance of public perception and support. This is why Rosa Schwartz's understanding of which children were best suited for the Kindertransport was vital. She had the obligation of not only saving the individual Kind, but maintaining the integrity of the Kindertransport program.

The Kindertransport was the only opportunity for many of the Kinder chosen to find safety. After Kristallnacht, the visa process became nearly impossible. Elsbeth Levin's father experienced this surge in applications when he watched the visa numbers increase drastically in the short time after Kristallnacht.⁹² This strain on the system was in some ways remedied by the increase in allowances for Kinder by the British government. This quota increase allowed for the development of the primary organization for the Kindertransport, the Movement for the Care of Children from Germany. The Kindertransport consisted of many small groups that formed coalitions to save Kinder. Within the transport, women were ever present as social workers, transport organizers, and intermediaries. Women from all backgrounds became instrumental in the process of moving Kinder from Nazi Germany.

The most effective way to save Kinder was in an organizational setting. Quakers represented a highly effective and motivated organization of activists focused on refugee aid. This aid was often organized by women. The department heads of the Quaker refugee relief were all women. Women were not only well represented in the leadership of Quaker organizations, women rose to become leaders in many organizations surrounding the Kindertransport.

Though Eva Lewin was determined to leave Nazi Germany, she wanted to travel to Palestine. She, like many other Kinder, saw the opportunity to visit an unknown land as a fascinating adventure. However, after Kristallnacht and a large influx of applicants, Palestine began to hold a strong preference for candidates who were men that could farm. Eva was still determined to leave, but she did not plan to go to Britain until she met a woman named Mrs. Landmann in Berlin. Mrs. Landmann was a German Quaker who worked tirelessly to obtain affidavits for Kinder. When Mrs. Landmann became aware that Eva wanted to leave, she contacted Mrs. Atkinson in Britain. Through these channels, Eva left Nazi Germany. Mrs. Landmann also sent her son to Britain using these connections. She did not want her son to join the Hitler Youth. Though she could have left with her son, she chose to stay in Nazi Germany to continue her efforts.⁹³ She saved over 70 lives.⁹⁴ She received payment for her services, but she now has a tree on the Avenue of the Righteous in Israel.⁹⁵

Bertha Bracey was a Quaker woman who changed the lives of many Kinder. While serving as the Secretary for the Friends Committee on Refugees and Aliens, she spoke of the plight of the Kinder, and she was made the leader of over 80 case workers who helped her in handling over 80,000 case records. These workers were primarily women. She went on to represent the Kinder to both the British government and the German government. Her talent and passion saved the lives of many Kinder.⁹⁶

Because of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), Quakers like Bertha were able to rescue Kinder within Germany. The AFSC is a group within the Quaker community who were extremely active in the reconstruction of Germany after World War I. It took many years for the AFSC to have capabilities in Germany, because of this many Quakers were cautious with their interventions against Nazi opinions. Similar to the British, after the November Pogroms, the Quakers became significantly more compelled to aid the Jews in Nazi Germany. However, the leaders were worried about violating the trust they had built over several years. The integrity of the relationship had to be preserved for the stake of all Quaker rescue programs. It was this confidence that eventually enabled them to take children out of harm's way.⁹⁷

The movement of children on the part of the Quakers was paramount to the success of the Transports. Many of the people throughout the Transports were Quakers.⁹⁸ They were called upon by the British government to aid when they could not get information independently. They were sent to Berlin by the British government to report on the condition of Jewish young people in Berlin. This emergency delegation would not have been possible without the Quakers; Britain was at war but the Quakers were not.⁹⁹ Because of this delegation, Britain was able to have a bridge between them and the Kinder.

From advocacy to education, the fundamental structure of the Kindertransport in continental Europe was dependent on outside help. These loosely organized bands of people and groups came together to organize and prepare Kinder for the future Nazi Germany would try to take from them. Organizations and individuals filled specific needs both knowingly and unknowingly. These tasks which they fulfilled allowed the Kinder to move safely, get passports, and acclimate to their new 'home.'

Kinder Helping Kinder

Along the voyage away from Hitler's Germany, many of the Kinder became their own protectors. Across the testimonies examined, Female Kinder proved to be essential to the Kindertransport process. Their organization was not unified, but their motivations stemmed from similar desires to protect the innocent and protect themselves.

There was a distinct lack of power in the position of Kinder. German Jewry faced a significant amount of dehumanization in Nazi Germany.¹⁰⁰ However, with the loss of family, country, and sometimes a deeper identity, there was a dehumanization that occurred within the mind of a child. Kinder could find themselves in a country with no connections, no language skills, and no knowledge of the culture. Considering that they were children, they were also powerless to the whims of their rescuers.¹⁰¹¹⁰² Children on the Kindertransport experienced the economic, social, and physical degradation of their family, community, and themselves.¹⁰³ Many Kinder took these experiences and utilized them to empower themselves and improve their future.

Because of the cruel nature of Nazi Germany, Jewish children had to change their actions on a near-constant basis. Nazi Germany forced upon its Jewish children the identity of a foreigner. From 1935, Jews were not citizens of the Third Reich.¹⁰⁴ Though their fathers may have served in the first World War, they could not salute their country's leader or sing their anthem.¹⁰⁵ These differences pushed the children away and isolated them from their peers. Several Kinder expressed deep sorrow associated with the loss of a friend because of Hitler Youth organizations.¹⁰⁶¹⁰⁷¹⁰⁸ These programs indoctrinated young people into 'othering' their Jewish classmates. The events which taught Aryan children the Nazi mentality alerted non-Aryan children of the danger that was arising.

Hanna Marcus was the child of conservative Jewish parents who did not have friends outside of the community. One of her first experiences with Anti- Semitism was when her Roman Catholic friends joined Hitler Youth, and she could not be friends with them anymore.¹⁰⁹ This development further enforced the separate communities and labeled her as the "racial enemy."¹¹⁰ Sylvia Schneider's first memory of Anti- Semitism was watching the Gestapo drag a man away while shopping with her mother.¹¹¹ Alice Boddy is sure that teachers were pro- Nazi and the law enabled them to act upon their Anti- Semitism.¹¹² In one of the clearest memories Marianne Salinger depicted, she explained her experience with Jutta von Mueller. Jutta was Marianne's best friend, Marianne continued to smile as she explained that Jutta, after joining the Hitler Youth, refused to travel home with her from a social gathering. Marianne did not seem to be terribly hurt by these events. She explained that the antisemitism was a means to quick maturation. She and other targeted children in Nazi Germany had to grow up quickly. Marianne was resigned to this fact.¹¹³ These events helped these women to disconnect from their environment and accept the idea of transport. In many of the Kinder's testimonies, they speak of travel and emigration in a dreamlike manner. This disconnect and maturity helped the Kinder to cope with the trauma of the Kindertransport.

In her tireless efforts to protect her family, Alice Boddy demonstrated her determination to protect others before herself. This determination is evident because she placed herself in harm's way for the sake of her family. She had witnessed the danger, and she was not willing to allow her family to fall victim. While many Jews were facing arrest, she waited in line to get a visa for her brother. She even worked to have her mother brought to England after she arrived. Her dedication was so great that her new family chastised her. They asserted that she had to have been an expert on visas. Her expertise paid off when her mother followed her to Britain. Shortly

after, she was set to leave her mother again when she received passage to America. Eventually, she was able to find passage for her mother to join her in America. Though her story had a happier ending than most, Alice demonstrated that there was a longing to protect those around her, this longing was rooted in the instability of their status.¹¹⁴

Coordinators of the Kindertransport often left Kinder without the ability to understand or control their future. Eva Levin referenced Uncle Tom's Cabin when describing her transport experience. She says she felt like a slave at auction.¹¹⁵ Many of the Kinder explained their feelings of objectification and their confusion during their experiences. This lack of control encouraged some Kinder to take control and to advocate for other Kinder when they could.

Advocacy for the sake of fellow children was not only present on the transport. Many targeted children took care of each other in Nazi Germany. Before her transport, Ellen Kerry Davis lived in an orphanage in Berlin, Germany. The caretakers did not adequately feed the orphans. As a result, she would steal food and necessities for them. In her testimony, she referred to the other orphans as her "children." She took responsibility and control of the situation. The Hitler Youth beat them up the first time they caught them stealing, and the Gestapo beat them the second time they caught them stealing. The damages from her beating were lifelong, but she does not regret them. Ellen felt protective of her fellow Jewish orphans. She had the need to protect Jewish children before the Kindertransport began.¹¹⁶ Ellen felt the need to protect her "children," because adults would not have accepted her appeal. She understood that the only way to improve the situation was through her own efforts.

The theme of Kinder taking responsibility for each other was easy to find among female Kinder. They represented a sense of obligation to fellow Kinder. On the transport, Alice Boddy took on the position of a caretaker. As she was boarding the train for the Netherlands, a young,

crying mother handed her a two-year-old baby. She promised the mother that she would care for her child. Alice still remembers the desire to protect the young Kind. The boy began to run a fever, and she had to give it to Red Cross Personnel, but she said that she will always be haunted by the child and her desire to know what fate it met.¹¹⁷

Several female Kind had similar experiences with being assigned the role of caretaker on the transport. During Eva Lewin's transport, older girls were responsible, by default, for the care of younger Kinder.¹¹⁸ This challenged older Kinder to utilize the maturity they had gained for the benefit of the younger travelers. It also helped them to remain distracted in light of the trauma. This cooperation was dependent on the maturity of the older Kinder. Kindertransport cars occasionally broke out into turmoil from a lack of supervision and anxiety from the transport.¹¹⁹

To care for each other, Kinder traded goods and services amongst themselves. Sylvia Schneider explained that there was a very small amount of supervision. This meant that the Kinder were responsible for taking care of themselves. When she and her sister wanted to begin their new life in Great Britain without lice, they used their food money to buy kerosene, and they shaved their hair. There was no one to do anything for them while they waited to move onto the next step in the transport. They were taught by their mother to care for themselves. Sylvia believes that her mother knew they would be in a situation similar to the one that they experienced in the Kindertransport.¹²⁰

The only people who understood the experiences of a Kind was another Kind. This is because their experiences were so unique that they could only truly relate to each other. This caused a bonding to occur. Though mothers and the help of others were important, the only

people present at every stop in the Kindertransport were Kinder. This meant that female Kinder who were encouraged served as helpers throughout the whole narrative of the Kindertransport.¹²¹

One of the most efficient ways to fight for the safety of the Kinder was through advocacy. Teachers, parents, social- workers, and other Kinder often had to protect Kinder in the face of a government against them and a world that reluctantly allowed them to immigrate. The battle to get Kinder out of Nazi Germany was reliant on the labors of Mothers, outside help, and Kinder. Without the cooperation of these groups, the process may have failed.

Mothers acted on the front line. Mothers often experienced Anti- Semitism first, they were charged with helping to find safety, and understanding when safety meant emigration. They made the most difficult decisions of the Kindertransport process; sometimes these were the most important decisions.

Beyond the home, other actors worked in the process of preparing the Kinder for transport, organizing the transports, and executing the plans. These concerned citizens saved the lives of strangers because they witnessed the danger present in Nazi Germany. They were made up of organizations, individuals, and religious groups that realized the violence occurring against Jews and the risk to Kinder. Their levels of engagement rose significantly after Kristallnacht. They acted as non- Jewish representatives to the world on behalf of the Kinder.

Possibly the most important element of the Kindertransport out of Nazi Germany was the work of the Kinder. This is because they witnessed the violence around them, worked to get other people out, and took care of each other, they are one of the most effective groups of Kinder advocates. The voyage to their place of refuge was inconsistent and clouded by the unknown future of Europe. They had to combat this with a determination to take control of whatever part of their life they could.

Women comprised of a vital portion of these actors. No matter the reason why women could be more active, the narratives of the Kinder strongly indicate the dominance of women as helpers within all levels of the German Kindertransport experience.

⁵¹ Kaplan.

⁵² Marriane Salinger, interview by Toni Nickel, 2017, New York, NY.

⁵³ Kaplan.

⁵⁴ Myrna Goldenberg and Amy H. Shapiro, *Different Horrors / Same Hell : Gender and the Holocaust. Edited and Introduced by Myrna Goldenberg and Amy H. Shapiro*, The Stephen S. Weinstein Series in Post-Holocaust Studies (Seattle : University of Washington Press, [2013], 2013), Non-fiction.

⁵⁵ Kaplan. 7-8.

⁵⁶ Sylvia Schneider, "Interview 33965," (1997).

⁵⁷ Hanna Marcus, "Interview 52358," (2006).

⁵⁸ Schneider.

⁵⁹ Marcus.

⁶⁰ Linda Gordon Kuzmack, *Woman's Cause: The Jewish Women's Movement in England and the United States, 1881-1933* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1990), 10.

⁶¹ Marcus.

⁶² Schneider.

⁶³ Goldenberg and Shapiro. 198.

⁶⁴ Salinger.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Kaplan. 6.

⁶⁷ Salinger.

⁶⁸ Eva Lewin, "Interview 10310," (1995).

⁶⁹ Kaplan. 62.

⁷⁰ Lewin.

⁷¹ Kaplan. 68.

⁷² Goldenberg and Shapiro. 198.

⁷³ Anthony Grenville, "The Kindertransports: An Introduction," *Yearbook of the Research Centre for German & Austrian Exile Studies* 13 (2012). 5- 6.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 6.

⁷⁵ Claudio Curio, "'Invisible' Children: The Selection and Integration Strategies of Relief Organizations," *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies*, no. 1 (2004).

⁷⁶ Kaplan. 7.

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- ⁷⁹ Ibid.
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- ⁸⁶ Ibid., 86-87.
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- ⁹⁰ Ibid.
- ⁹¹ Ibid.
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- ⁹³ Lewin.
- ⁹⁴ United States Holocaust Memorial Council, "Oral History Interview with Eva Lewin," in *Faith in Humankind oral history collection* (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 1984).
- ⁹⁵ Ibid.
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- ¹⁰⁰ Kaplan, Marion A. 1998. *Between dignity and despair: Jewish life in Nazi Germany*. Marion A. Kaplan. n.p.: New York: Oxford University Press, 1998., 1998. Texas A&M University
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- ¹⁰³ Ibid. 20- 21.
- ¹⁰⁴ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "Nuremberg Laws," in *Holocaust Encyclpoedia*.
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- ¹⁰⁶ Lewin.
- ¹⁰⁷ Boddy.
- ¹⁰⁸ Thea Rudzinski, "Interview 25856," (1997).
- ¹⁰⁹ Lewin.
- ¹¹⁰ Kaplan. 9.
- ¹¹¹ Schneider.
- ¹¹² Boddy.
- ¹¹³ Salinger.
- ¹¹⁴ Boddy.
- ¹¹⁵ Lewin.
- ¹¹⁶ Helene Elkus, "Interview 14724," (1995).

¹¹⁷ Boddy.

¹¹⁸ Marian Weisberg, "Interview 10310," (1995).

¹¹⁹ Vera K. Fast, *Children's Exodus: A History of the Kindertransport* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 35.

¹²⁰ Schneider.

¹²¹ Goldenberg and Shapiro. 209.

CHAPTER III

LIKE BEING ON AN AUCTION BLOCK

The decisions of refugee organizations and the British government largely determined the fate of the Kinder. The previously established Aliyah movements served to act as a precursor and guide to the organizations who helped with the Kinder in England.¹²² Many international organizations worked together to ensure the fate of the Kinder, once they arrived the same coalitions remained to ensure their continued well-being. People all over Europe, from every walk of life, came together to save over 10,000 primarily Jewish Kinder.¹²³

At the time of World War II, a vast number of British men were overseas or otherwise occupied with the war effort. The preoccupation of men opened opportunities for women to become involved in roles not specifically domestic. Women's responsibilities included a vast array of spheres including, children, and the jobs men could not fill. With over eight million British men serving in the war, British women were vital to the success of the daily proceedings within Great Britain.¹²⁴ The changes in the occupation of women did not wholly alter the mentality of the society; women were still considered caretakers. This mixed perspective is why women were able to act when the Kinder needed to be rescued from Nazi Germany. It was acceptable for women to care about these issues because it pertained to children, and women experienced greater levels of empowerment because of Britain's increased reliance on their work. The timing and nature of the task meant that women were more likely to hold the burden of saving these children.¹²⁵ Women were instrumental at all levels of the Kindertransport in Holland and Great Britain, they helped in the political sphere, the planning, and the hosting of the Kinder.¹²⁶

Holland: The Waypoint to Safety

After the commencement of the Kindertransports, the voyages took the Kinder in many different directions. The most common way- point existed in Holland. Passenger trains carrying Kinder would stop before the border, and they would be violently searched by the German Border guards, then they would pass into Holland. Upon their arrival in Holland, many Kinder experienced Dutch hospitality in the form of volunteer workers who provided candy, postcards, and a small dose of hope. Research has not documented these Dutch volunteers well, but Kinder discuss them heavily in descriptions of their transport experiences. Consistently described as women, Dutch volunteers boarded the train and welcomed the refugee children into the arms of safety.

As George Kovacs arrived in Holland, the train stopped at a station, where he was handed food and a postcard. He recalled this as a highly impactful part of his journey. He was not only given a postcard. Hope was given to him, a connection to home, and a symbolic gesture of having his needs met.¹²⁷ Similarly, Bea Green, recalled a “team of big and very kind ladies,” she was astonished that she did not know any of the women who were so caring for the stranger Kinder.¹²⁸

The fear of Nazi retribution was lost by Judy Benton when she crossed the border. She recalls in a moment of immaturity she stuck her tongue out to the Nazis who had just ransacked her rail car. Over the border, they entered a small town in Holland. As the volunteers entered the train, she realized that this group of women were all Jewish, based on symbols voluntarily affixed to their uniforms. This circumstance not only provided her with the food she desired, but

it also provided her with her first exposure to free Jewish women in the service of others. This had a long- lasting impact on Judy and her future decisions.¹²⁹

Beyond the trauma of separation from their parents and the experiences of violent persecution, Kinder who were aware of the situation, often rejoiced with the understanding that they had crossed the border. Eva Lewin remembers being in a train car with other Kinder and them all dancing in the train car, with the younger Kinder staring on in confusion.¹³⁰ After explaining her hardships in Germany, Margot Saffirstein described her determination never to return with a sense of pride. She explained that Jews could not do anything, that they had no freedom, and that her future did not begin until she entered Holland. With conviction, she stated that in Holland she “felt free.” She remembered the kind women who boarded her train in Holland and distributed chocolate. This was the moment that she felt free from the grasp of Nazi terror.¹³¹

Not all Kinder had a positive outlook on their border crossing. The entry into the Netherlands symbolized a passage into the unknown for many Kinder. Edith Bowen expected to feel “a great feeling of relief at being safe at last, but it did not happen.”¹³² Overall, the response of the Kinder to arrival in Holland was varied. However, all who crossed the border recognized that they were safe, for the moment, from Nazi terror. This safety was underscored by the juxtaposition of hospitality of the Dutch aid women and the violent actions of the German border guard. After stays of various lengths, most Kinder followed the path through Holland and into Great Britain.¹³³

Getting the Kinder to Great Britain: Organization of the Transports from the British End

The quick-formation of coalitions for the rescue of Kinder was dependent on the public's willingness to care for rescued children. Though, according to Margareta (Greta) Burkill, the motto of the British people became "we must save the children," the drive to protect Kinder was not organic.¹³⁴ The public had to hear of the atrocities of Kristallnacht to have such a distinct reaction and the reaction she described was perceived, not necessarily truth. Even considering the widespread call to action that "we must save the children" invokes, unease still surrounded the idea of accepting thousands of refugees from an increasingly hostile land. In fact, as discussion regarding the acceptance of refugees occurred on the floor of British Parliament on December 1st of 1938, Jewish MPs took a vow of silence.¹³⁵ This was because they feared that their voices would reflect poorly upon Jews as a group.

World War II Britain was not free of anti-Semitism. On the surface level, Christian outrage regarding the treatment of Europe's Jews was evident. However, only 18% of British citizens surveyed in 1940 felt that the Jews deserved sympathy.¹³⁶ Sympathy was a necessary component when requesting financial and organizational assistance from thousands of citizens. This lack of compassion is why Elaine Laski (Blond) believed that British efforts to combat domestic antisemitism required an increase in the light of Kristallnacht and the increasingly desperate situation in Nazi Germany.¹³⁷ As a leader in the refugee movement, she understood that a sympathetic public was essential to the success of their endeavors.

Elaine Laski was not alone in her awareness of the needs surrounding the German refugee crisis; many other women had the task of paving the way for Kinder before their arrival on British shores. Closely situated to Laski was Lola Hahn-Warburg, who also lobbied in the Samuel delegation to the Home Office. Hahn-Warburg had witnessed the atrocities presented

before the Jewish youth of Germany directly. It was this violence that pushed her and her family from Germany.¹³⁸ Lola Hahn- Warburg and Elaine Laski served as a formidable team codirecting the Refugee Children's Movement.¹³⁹

Bertha Bracey was acutely aware of the dangers in Nazi Germany. A Quaker in London, she often traveled to Germany as a child and was fluent in German. In 1933, she spearheaded an organization named the German Emergency Committee, which focused on the deteriorating conditions of Jews, specifically non- observant Jews who could not receive aid from any other organization. As the head of the German Emergency Committee, she grew the committee to over 80 members, the majority of whom were women.¹⁴⁰ In 1938, at the request of Wilfred Israel, Bertha Bracey led a group of Quakers into Germany to assess the threats present for German Jewish youth. The Germany Emergency Committee, a primarily Quaker organization, was present in Vienna and Berlin until 1941. It was in this role, and through her emergency evaluation of German Jewish youth, that Bracey was equipped with the knowledge to report the imminent threat to all non- Aryan children.¹⁴¹ She returned from her trip to Germany and promptly went to Home Secretary Sir Samuel Hoare. Bracey told Hoare of the urgency for children to receive 'facilitated entry' to the United Kingdom if they had a guarantor. Bertha's work as an intermediary helped to convince the British government and its aid organizations, that the danger was both legitimate and increasing.¹⁴²

In the fight to get Kinder out of Nazi Germany, Gertrudia (Truus) Wijsmuller-Meijer had no limits. Truus Wijsmuller-Meijer was a Dutch Christian who stood steadfast against Nazis consistently. She did this for the sake of Kinder. The journey for Kinder from Austria on December 5th, 1938, was not without difficulties. Because Austrian and German emigration policies differed, Wijsmuller-Meijer had to receive special permission from Eichmann to

evacuate Kinder from Austria. In an effort to complicate her situation, Eichmann demanded that the first transport begin only five days after their meeting. With help from others in the Jewish community Truus Wijsmuller-Meijer sent the first train of Kinder from Austria before the deadline given by Eichmann.¹⁴³ This was one of her most notable feats, through her courage she saved over 600 Kinder.¹⁴⁴

Truus Wijsmuller-Meijer's fearlessness saved Thea Rudzinski's life. There was a sense of urgency because Thea Rudzinski traveled at the in the last days of the Kindertransport. She traveled to the Netherlands with incomplete paperwork. Thea Rudzinski had very little notice before her trip began. As a result of her incomplete paperwork, she had to stay until all of her information was sorted and approved.¹⁴⁵ Thea Rudzinski was transported on the last Kindertransport out of Germany in 1940. On this Kindertransport, Truus Wijsmuller-Meijer commandeered a ship and smuggled about 100 Kinder to safety.¹⁴⁶

Women wishing to make a change on behalf of refugees were not entirely dependent on men. Eleanor Rathbone was a champion for the rights of refugees. As an MP, Eleanor Rathbone stood before Parliament on countless occasions to fight for the safety of refugees. She held the Parliament accountable to the well-being of those in need. This accountability included Kinder, who, at the start of the war, faced internment. When she presented her arguments before Parliament, she would combat popular arguments against refugee admission, like jobs, antisemitism, and cost. Eleanor Rathbone emphasized the peril standing before those who were victims of Nazi terror. She also explained that the burden of this relief had taken a significant toll on those attempting to save the few they could. This toll she says had been placed primarily on women. The constant reminder that Parliament is accountable and responsible for the care of those who are needy provided a break from weak excuses in exchange for reasonable rebuke.¹⁴⁷

Though Rathbone was not very effective in her demonstrations before Parliament, these presentations provided her with a foothold for her larger contribution. Created by Rathbone in response to Nazi terror and refugee need, the National Committee for Rescue from Nazi Terror attempted to make the danger before Europe's Jews an item of national concern. As an MP, Eleanor Rathbone became the face of the Committee to Parliament. She also advocated the cause of refugees present in Great Britain, like the Kinder, in 1942 when she published *Rescue the Perishing*. *Rescue the Perishing* was a pamphlet distributed publically that informed the reader of the larger dangers facing European Jewry, and it told the reader of the most efficient methods of providing aid.¹⁴⁸ This dynamic outreach provided a voice to these victims in the political and social sphere, while many Kinder were either present in British life or interned. The issues facing Kinder after their arrival did not end, they just took on new faces.¹⁴⁹

As a wealthy activist with German roots, Greta Burkill was able to see a danger in Germany from an early time and act upon this risk to save lives. Beginning in the mid- 1930's Burkill was finding placement for Jewish university aged men in Cambridge.¹⁵⁰ By the time the Refugee Children's Movement was trying to form regional committees to recruit and monitor placements, Burkill had already established a successful regional operation to save and maintain refugees. Greta Burkill was the chairman of the Cambridgeshire Committee. At the height of the movement, Greta Burkill was responsible for over 2000 Kinder.¹⁵¹ She focused on finding the financial backing for any educational endeavor of her Kinder. This economic freedom made them successful academically. It contributed greatly to the community.¹⁵²

Burkill's impact was so lasting in the memory of the Kinder that the Kindertransport Association's newsletter in 2012 boasted letters from Kinder explaining the impact this kind woman had on them. Susan Medas, in her heartfelt letter explains that Burkill's drive for the

Kinder to receive the best education was what built her success. In addition, Medas explained that her concern went beyond education. Burkill also provided support for Kinder who were having issues in their adjustment to life in Great Britain.¹⁵³

Along with providing opportunities to Kinder, promoting the domestic wellbeing of Kinder in their placements became the responsibility of some female workers on the Refugee Children's Movement. Mrs. D.H. Hardisty was the general secretary of the Refugee Children's Movement. In her position, she acted as an advisor, a mother, and a friend. She believed firmly that the responsibility for parenting Kinder belonged solely to the Refugee Children's Movement. When Dorothy Hardisty heard of Kinder who were acting poorly, she took the side of the children. Instead of discussing punishment, she advocated for a better understanding of the Kinder. She believed that the trauma the Kinder endured required the highest level of understanding.¹⁵⁴

During his transports, Sir Nicholas Winton was always present at the train platform for his Kinder. Though he was in charge of the logistics related to the transport, it was his mother who handled the specifics as they happened. Sir Winton explained that children were often not at the same train station as their sponsor. This created confusion and upset. Sir Winton said that it was his mother, Barbara Winton who handled the upset children and sponsors. She ensured that all Kinder found their way to a home after their arrival, whether it was the one they planned for or not.¹⁵⁵

As Kinder moved through their passage, people would help direct them along the way. Often cited as a significant barrier to adjustment, many Kinder were unable to speak English.¹⁵⁶ Elspeth Lewin describes one of her first experiences as having been picked up from a train station by two women with silly sounding words.¹⁵⁷ Women are overwhelmingly present in the memory of transition from trains and boats to the new home of the Kinder. An American journalist

who was watching the arrival of Kinder to the Liverpool Street Station, remarked that the group organizing it looked like a Junior League Committee. This is because all he saw was a group of well-dressed women waiting for refugee children. Elaine Laski was one of the women on the platform in Liverpool Street. She was regularly involved in the unloading process. This work involved consciously separating the waiting foster parents and the Kinder, then announcing names as they are ready. Organizers of the transport had to do this to prevent people from leaving with the wrong child.¹⁵⁸

The procedure for distributing Kinder was disheartening for a Kind who did not speak English. As she was waiting, Eva Lewin stood with a tag on her button and the memory of Uncle Tom's Cabin on her mind. The major elements of her experience that made her feel completely out of control were her inability to understand the language and the reasons for her transfer after all of the other Kinder had left.¹⁵⁹ If a Kind had a sponsor for their voyage, then they would be distributed to a meeting location convenient to the sponsor. This movement was not simple. It consisted of several independent organizations that learned to work together with government regulations through the Kindertransport process.

Making Great Britain Home

In November of 1938, the expectation of the House of Lords in Great Britain was that the Kinder would be out of Britain at the conclusion of their education or training on the condition that they were not employed. This expectation was far from what occurred however, it correctly reflects the sentiment that placements were always meant to be transitory. Kinder were only supposed to stay on a temporary basis. Many Kinder took Great Britain as their new home, but

this was not the initial intention. Though placement in the Kindertransport program was only supposed to be temporary, the commitment to care for a Kind was huge.

Retrospectively, Ralph Samuel understood the enormity of providing guarantee that a Kind would not become a burden to the state. In describing the family structure that took place in his foster home, he explained that for a middle- aged man to take responsibility for a teenage boy, until that boy was eighteen years old, was grand. He knew that his foster father intended to have more kids. Ralph also knew that his foster family risked stability by sponsoring him. He explained that there was not an abundance of information provided to potential sponsors. Ralph's foster father chose him because his first name was the same, and Samuel was the name of another family member

Through the utilization of the powers of mass media and sympathy, throughout Britain, the appeal for temporary accommodation of Kinder was heard.¹⁶⁰ These efforts were fruitful, but the vetting process took time. As the Refugee Children's Movement waited for the approval of homes, many children were moved into Holiday camps on the coast of England.¹⁶¹ Many Kinder ended up residing in these camps until other arrangements for their care could be made. Many Kinder complained of the conditions in these camps. They were cold, has sickness spreading quickly, and held children who were traumatized. The conditions were brutal. Anna Essinger was enlisted to improve conditions in one of the camps.¹⁶²

As the headmistress of a school near Ulm, Anna Essinger was alarmed when Hitler took control of Germany. Anna was anti nationalist and non-Zionist. Her progressive school in Ulm housed several Jewish students. As the danger became clear, she promptly moved her school from Germany to Bunce Court, in Kent. This was a feat that could only have been executed by a woman with Essinger's dedication. Essinger said that it was difficult to find staff sympathetic to

the needs of Germans leaving in 1933. Anna and her Staff had to account for the change in location, staff, and location. This was a radical move, but she made the right decision for her, the staff that followed her, and her students.¹⁶³

Fedora Singer remembers her arrival at Bunce court as impactful because she saw her sister, “a savior, an angel.” Arriving, Singer explained “I was all alone and there she was, my sister.”¹⁶⁴ Apart from the undercurrent of worry for the safety of family, Singer and her sister were able to have a relatively normal life at Bunce court. The population was more than half German Jews, this provided for comradeships and a common sense of origin among the pupils. Essinger created this world for German Jews to find refuge while not losing their entire identity.¹⁶⁵

As the Headmistress at Bunce court, Essinger was able to save many of her staff members and their students. The school she reestablished in England went on to provide safety to hundreds of Kinder after the transports began. Her ability to effectively run the school and maintain order led the Refugee Children's Movement to request her help in Dovercourt.

When Ursula Adler arrived at Dovercourt on the 15th of December in 1938, she experienced the coldest winter in her memory. She was frightened, cold, unhappy, and continuously crying. Her sister, who was 16, was able to help her through her anxiety by distracting her and providing a connection to home. Through their time at the camp, many families wanted to adopt Ursula, but her sister would not allow them to take her. This was the only way her sister could try to keep them together- a promise she had made to their mother. They remained at the camp until they were taken to a convalescent home on the 31st of December.¹⁶⁶ Ursula was subject to the ‘meat market’ style distribution of Kinder that deeply disturbed Anna Essinger upon her arrival to Dovercourt.¹⁶⁷

When Anna Essinger arrived at Dovercourt in early 1939, the problems that had accumulated in the camp were exhausting. Her most pressing issue was the population. She revitalized the search for suitable housing for the children in her care. Essinger also hired several of her coworkers from the Bunce Court school to provide more individualized care for the charges.¹⁶⁸ The decision to have Kinder matched with families before meeting was one of her larger decisions that addressed one of the more dehumanizing events experienced by a Dovercourt Kind.¹⁶⁹ Essinger placed an enormous amount of importance of the quality of education received by Kinder in her care; this allowed her Kinder to have better opportunities later in life.¹⁷⁰

Once settled, Kinder with strong connections to their temporary situation were able to find solace and happiness. As Margit Diamond arrived at her destination on the Kindertransport, she was challenged with a sink or swim situation. Margit was given the opportunity to live and study at a private boarding school in Britain during the Kindertransport. When she arrived in Great Britain, she did not speak any language other than German. She knew that to succeed, she would have to learn as quickly as possible. She learned the language, and then she became the best at the language. Her surroundings and her determination to be the best possible challenged Margit. Her determination was not without support. Margit discussed the influence of her principle at the boarding school. Through the testimony, Margit was distant, but when she discussed her principal Elsie M. Lobb, she gained emotion. Principle Lobb provided her with love and safety. Margit explained that if her mother had not survived, Principle Lobb would have tried to adopt her.¹⁷¹ This connection fostered the ability for Margit to thrive in an environment where success was nearly impossible.

Alice Litzi Smith did not meet her foster mother at the train station when she was selected. Her foster mother's son, Alec Berwitz, selected her to join a group intended to populate their new hostel. When he chose her to go to the hostel he fell in love with her; she used this to manipulate him into taking her brothers as well. Because of Alec's attachment to Alice, Alice was fostered by Alec's old mother. Augusta Berwitz or Auntie Gustie became a loving companion and caretaker to Alice. She provided Alice with support as she worried and obsessed over the safety of her parents. Though her parents were murdered, Alice was able to celebrate life's major moments with her foster mother.¹⁷² Her foster mother could not replace her parents, but the ability to have someone dedicated to her enabled Alice to continue a healthy life post-war.

Vera Gissing fled Czechoslovakia around the age of nine with her sister on the Kindertransport. When the pair arrived at the train station in Liverpool, they were separated.¹⁷³ This trauma was not uncommon for Kinder. As time progressed, there was a shortage of foster families. This shortage also affected the placement of Kinder based on religion.¹⁷⁴ Vera's loving and supportive foster mother mitigated the trauma of Vera's separation. Vera was placed with the Rainford family at Bloomsbury House. As her foster mother introduced herself to Vera, she told her that in their home she would always be loved. This was the assurance Vera needed to get through the loss of her parents and sister.¹⁷⁵

Conversely, the experience of Ellen Kerry Davis was harmful. A woman who was 50 years old and a man who was 70 years old fostered Ellen. Ellen said that the old couple fostered her so they would have someone to care for them in their old age. Since they did not have kids, she was supposed to be the substitute. The old man was not overly present in her testimony, other than for her to express her fondness for him. However, Ellen discusses her foster mother in

great depth. During the initial interactions, Ellen and her foster mother could not communicate because of a language barrier. This barrier grew and turned into animosity when Ellen's foster mother cut Ellen's hair and changed her name. This made Ellen feel isolated and as if she was completely out of control. Her life was still successful, but her emotional wellbeing suffered greatly for her distance from the matriarch of her foster home.¹⁷⁶

The difference between isolation and inclusion are vast to a Kind. This is because they already experienced the trauma of exile from their home country, separation from their parents, and faced with a new and uncontrollable world. Women who surrounded them with support empowered Vera, Alice, and Margit, while Ellen was weakened by her foster mother who was unkind. The difference in outcome based on treatment emphasizes the importance of these female figures in the lives of the Kinder.

As members of Dutch volunteer committees, women provided for the emotional support of the Kinder; Anna Essinger provided an excellent service to the Kinder in the reform of the Dovercourt Holiday Camp, and Elaine Laski provided for the continued wellbeing of the Kinder by ensuring the quality matches of the families.

As the war began for England, Kinder were once again subjected to this sense of transitivity. Kinder were either taken to a northern area of England for safety, or they went to internment camps. Thousands of Kinder were transported, like British youth, to the north. Kinder were subjected to more stringent regulations, because many of them lived in what was considered 'protected areas.' These were places that would not allow an alien to remain in residence.¹⁷⁷ British youth were also moved in an unexplained manner. This evacuation was traumatic for both the British youth and the Kinder.

Ralph Samuel experienced a double displacement, and it was his own mother who aided in his settlement. When Ralph was placed on a Kindertransport from Nazi Germany, he left alone. He left on January 9th, 1939, and his mother came three months later in March. Ralph's foster family was loving and dedicated to providing him with proper care. His foster family was so dedicated to saving people from Nazi terror that they hired Ralph Samuel as a maid in their home. At the time, a relatively effective way for an adult Jew to leave, was for them to have a guaranteed job. The guaranteed job saved the life of Samuel's mother.¹⁷⁸

In September of 1939, English children were evacuated from cities and towns into the countryside- this was operation Pied Piper. This evacuation meant that Samuel, like many other Kinder, would be exposed to another traumatic movement from their stable homes into an unknown environment. Operation Pied Piper was not traumatic only for Kinder, it was traumatic for all children moved.¹⁷⁹ Ralph Samuel revealed details of this trauma in explaining the role his mother played in easing the upset.

Provided a place of refuge by Mrs. Strachey, an old and influential lady in the small village of Guildford, Ralph Samuel and his classmates from London began a new and temporary life as evacuees. Mrs. Strachey would care for the evacuee children, but she did not meet their emotional needs. Ralph was eight years old, and his classmates were likely similar in age. They needed to be comforted through their trauma. During a visit from Ralph's mother, Mrs. Strachey hired Ralph's mother to ask as a governess to the evacuee children. Ralph's mother did an excellent job.

The child evacuees were traumatized in ways similar to the Kinder, symptoms of trauma were intensified among Kinder. Ralph explained that evacuee children would often wet the bed, they would cry out at night, and they would demonstrate signs of distress. His mother could

understand displacement, because she was a refugee; she could understand children, because she had a child; and she was resourceful, so she sought ways to ease the evacuee's hurt. In a particular instance, Ralph's mother cured the incessant bed-wetting among his housemates. The children would go to sleep and wake up with a wet bed. They would always insist that they had visited the restroom in the night. Ralph's mother told them that the next time they went to the restroom, they would have to feel the bathroom, they needed to feel the cold. These feelings would verify that they were awake. According to Samuel, this direction cured the problem. Ralph's mother's intuition was based in understanding.

Ralph's mother utilized her intuition to create a life for herself and Ralph after the war. They stayed in Guildford, and she began a clinic caring for children with Rickets. This remedy was one she adapted from the training she received in Polio care when Ralph was afflicted in Germany. As a Kind, Ralph did not have the same power his mother had in creating new outcomes for himself, he was a child and was not autonomous.¹⁸⁰

The feeling of displacement paired with their inability to control their circumstances troubled many Kinder significantly. Though their future was undoubtedly more promising in Great Britain, they were entirely reliant on strangers. Many of the most important strangers to the Kinder were women. These women took control of dangerous and troubling situations to ensure that the best interest of the Kindertransports, and through extension the Kind, was taken into account.

The beginning of Britain's involvement in the war upended many of the Kinder. Between evacuations and internment, the lives of Kinder became vastly more unpredictable by 1940. Because the term "enemy alien" was affixed to refugees from Germany in Britain, hundreds of Kinder from the Refugee Children's Movement were subject to a relatively arbitrary system of

internment. With this distinction, the government sent children who were considered a high risk to places like Canada, Australia, and the Isle of Man.¹⁸¹ Bloomsbury House was quick to protest these decisions. Among the objections was Elain Laski, who opposed internment on the grounds of poor living conditions and an ill-planned scheme. The British government did not actively hear these arguments.

When Judy Benton was of age and working, the group of Jewish refugees from her hostel were taken from their homes and placed in an agricultural school. The intention of this school was likely Zionist, she remarked that they had to stay there because they could not go to Israel, “the borders were closed.” While at the agriculture school for refugees she recalls being very thankful for her stateless passport. Their non-German passports saved Judy and her future husband from internment. Arrival as a Kind would not have saved Judy from being sent to the Isle of Man, then Australia or Canada when ‘adults’ with German passports became enemies of the state. At the onset of the decision, many of her peers from the agriculture camp were interred. At the camp, they experienced anti- German sentiments, and their caretakers exposed them to a lack of sympathy for their cause. These issues were more pronounced for workers with German passports.¹⁸²

Though they were victims in the situation, low levels of understanding in Benton’s community exposed her and her peers to intolerance. Because Kinder were of a large variety of ages, there was a significant variation in experiences. However, there was a consistently present worry among Kinder who aged out of the system. They feared the instability of living as an enemy alien, without any significant stability, in a state whose citizens were not consistently supportive. This is the kind of issue that Eleanor Rathbone was sensitive to, her organization helped to unite the other aid organizations and continue to provide assistance to refugees, even

after the onset of war.¹⁸³ This is also the situation that Laski hoped to prevent the increase in British national education regarding tolerance.

Bertha Bracy actively protested against the internment of refugees through her role as the Quakers' Chairman of the Central Department for Interned refugees. This involvement also manifested itself in her chairmanship of the Central Department of Interned Refugees. The duties of this organization involve enforcing accountability for living conditions and actively protesting internment. The protests against internment did not end the practice, but the attention maintained public visibility for the interned Kinder.¹⁸⁴

Beyond the organization of transports, women were vital to the continued success of the Kindertransports. British and Dutch women of all ages, religions, and socioeconomic statuses banded together to provide for the Kinder. The women mentioned throughout this chapter were keystones in the transports. They did not act alone, but their actions directly saved thousands. In the Kindertransport experiences, the involvement of one conscientious and innovative woman saved lives on multiple occasions. The encouragement provided to Kinder was very important. Mental health issues were understood to be present in Kinder by Dorothy Hardisty.¹⁸⁵ Other women in the Kinder movements understood the impact that they had on the Kinder who had such little stability in their volatile lives.

The most important element of the Kindertransports in Great Britain was unity/ Unity because the government and the citizens had to work together. Because there was a willingness to share ideas and work in multiple groups, Kinder were able to benefit from a broader array of experiences. Though they were not able to function without assistance from men, women in Britain and Holland during the Kindertransports directly saved lives, and they continued to help Kinder after their new lives began.

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- ¹⁵⁰ Turner, 23.
- ¹⁵¹ Ibid., 182.
- ¹⁵² Fast, 174.
- ¹⁵³¹⁵³ Susanne Medas, "Great Burkill-- Cambridge Refugees Committee," (2012).
- ¹⁵⁴ Oldfield, 66-68.
- ¹⁵⁵ Winton.
- ¹⁵⁶ Safirstein.
- ¹⁵⁷ Lewin.
- ¹⁵⁸ Barry Turner, *And the Policeman Smiled*, (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Limited, 1990).
- ¹⁵⁹ Lewin.
- ¹⁶⁰ Mary J. Gallant, "The "Kindertransport"; Gender and the Rescue of Jewish Children," *Different horrors, same hell: gender and the Holocaust* (2013): 206-07.
- ¹⁶¹ Turner, *And the Policeman Smiled*.
- ¹⁶² Ibid., 59.
- ¹⁶³ Oldfield, 61.
- ¹⁶⁴ Feodora Singer, "Interview 13961," (1996).
- ¹⁶⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁶⁶ Ursula Adler, "Interview 32900," (1997).
- ¹⁶⁷ Turner, *And the Policeman Smiled*, 59-65.
- ¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 59-60.
- ¹⁶⁹ Oldfield, 62.
- ¹⁷⁰ Turner, *And the Policeman Smiled*, 59-60.
- ¹⁷¹ Margit Diamond, "Interview 3834," (1995).
- ¹⁷² Alice Litzi Smith, "Interview 42377," (1998).
- ¹⁷³ Goldenberg and Shapiro.
- ¹⁷⁴ Fast, 43.
- ¹⁷⁵ Goldenberg and Shapiro, 206.
- ¹⁷⁶ Ellen Kerry Davis, "Interview 14724," (1996).
- ¹⁷⁷ Fast, 61.
- ¹⁷⁸ Ralph Samuel, "Interview 52468," (2002).
- ¹⁷⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁸⁰ Ibid.
- ¹⁸¹ Turner, *And the Policeman Smiled*, 144.
- ¹⁸² Benton.
- ¹⁸³ Bunting.
- ¹⁸⁴ Turner, *And the Policeman Smiled*, 144-53.
- ¹⁸⁵ Oldfield, 68.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

During the Kindertransport, there was a significant amount of social responsibility given to women in both Nazi Germany and Great Britain. In both locations, unrest created cultural changes conducive to women being more effective in organizing Kindertransports. The previous chapters have traveled through the Kindertransport experience from beginning in Nazi Germany to the relative safety of Great Britain. These chapters used the testimony of Kinder to show the correspondence between gender and work on the Kindertransports, they have also examined the impact that gender has on Kindertransport testimony.

Scholarly work in respect to the topic of women in Kindertransport is currently deficient. At this time, scholarship related to Kinder memory of women in the Kindertransport appears to be very limited. Further exploration of this topic would be necessary for consistencies between the perceptions of multiple historians to be observed.

The second chapter discussed the theme of women's impact on the organization of the Kindertransport in Nazi Germany. This section found that there were three primary actors in the process of saving Kinder. These actors were the mother, the other outside organizations, and the fellow Kinder.

Mothers acted as a foretelling canary in the coal mine. They tended to understand the danger of Nazi xenophobia prior their male counterparts. If their family heeded their advice, then their families were able to be safer. Jewish mothers were also able to exercise more freedom

following Kristallnacht than their male family members. Jewish men were more likely to be arrested, so matriarchs often organized emigration and worked outside the home when possible.

Because of their declining position in society, it was also necessary for outsiders to assist in emigration. On the Kindertransports, many non- Jewish women acted as domestic representatives of facilitating organizations. These women provided support to Kinder and their families as they prepared for transport. Women in these roles also negotiated with the German government to obtain emigration documents for Kinder.

The most impactful participant in the Kindertransport experience was the Kind. Because of the unique situation of the Kinder, there is no way to completely understand their experiences without being a Kind. There was also a lack of consistency along the transport. At times, Kinder had little or no adult supervision. In these cases, female Kinder often received the role of caretaker to younger Kinder. These caretakers, if they were mature enough for the task, were beneficial for the outcome of the other Kinder.

The third chapter showed women organizing Kinder reception in Holland, the logistics of transports, the maintenance of the Kinder, and the creation of a new home. The descriptions they offer of their lives in Great Britain evidenced the perception of Kinder on women's impact in the Kindertransport.

As Kinder arrived in Holland, the testimony overwhelmingly represents their first friendly contact as female Dutch aid workers. These workers provided not just physical nourishment in food, but to many Kinder, these women provided emotional support through a reassuring presence.

Before and during the Kindertransports, organizational provisions were necessary. The British domestic sphere was primarily the responsibility of women. In this role, women like

Bertha Bracey, Eleanor Laski, and Greta Burkill, were able to motivate others to help the Kinder. Women sought assistance for Kinder in the forms of monetary contributions, in the acceptance of Kinder into homes, and in the form of supporting refugee populations. Kinder, in their testimonies often indirectly discussed the impact of these women. For example, Anna Essinger's influence is evident through the experiences of several Kinder while in her care.

Women were extraordinarily important in settlement of Kinder once they arrived. Organizations and infrastructure largely created by women provided Kinder with support and safety. After their arrival, Kinder commonly found placement in a Hostel, a traditional home, or in a school. As a result of the war, men being away from home, and social traditions, women often took on leadership roles in these places. Kinder often recounted the disposition of their caretaker, who often determined how tolerable the Kind's experience was. When a Kind was unhappy or needed help with their situation, they often recalled women as their aids. As the war progressed, women across Great Britain led charges on behalf of interned Kinder. Finally, it was generally female caretakers that the Kinder described as lasting semi-familial relations.

Through intensive inspection of Kindertransport documentation, it is clear that women were integral to the Kindertransport process in Nazi Germany, Holland, and in Great Britain. Though men were present in these campaigns, women were the heroes in large part forgotten by history. Accounts from Kinder provide insight into the true extent of the impact of women in the Kindertransport experience.

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